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LINCOLN AND THE PATRONAGE¹

THE inauguration of Lincoln has for us so tragic and so critical an aspect, that we find it difficult to put ourselves in the place of the average politician of the day, to whom it was chiefly interesting, as affording an opportunity for plunder, or as bringing, almost, a certainty of removal. No sooner were the election returns in, than Springfield filled with anxious crowds,² and during the nine days which he spent in Washington, as President-elect, Lincoln was pursued by applicants, as eager as if there were no doubt about the stability of the government they wished to serve.³ To those who were present in the flesh must be added thousands who confided their desires to the post, and, according to his degree, every Republican of prominence was deluged with requests, modest and pretentious,⁴ some accompanied by bribes,⁵ others supported by an appeal to pity,⁶ or a claim for reward.⁷ It was a motley crowd; western lawyers mingled with the drill sergeants of Weed's organization, while some sturdy workers against slavery thought that their disinterested constancy might now receive an earthly crown.⁸ A new party had come into power, eager to break its fast, and feast on the good things that the administration had to dispense.

Richard Henry Dana wrote to Charles Francis Adams, March 9, 1863, of Lincoln: "He seems to me to be fonder of details than of principles, of tithing the mint, anise and cummins of patronage, and personal questions, than of the weightier matters of empire."⁹ Lincoln himself deeply lamented the time devoted to these petty

¹ This article is a by-product of a work on the history of the patronage. Lincoln's administration is not particularly significant, from the point of view of development, but is rich in materials. It, therefore, seemed worth while, considering also the intrinsic interest of everything that relates to Lincoln, to prepare a fuller treatment of this period than just proportion would permit in the completed work.

² Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 457.

³ Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, I, 423.

⁴ Chase MSS. I have read several thousand such letters, for the period 1860-1865. See also Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax*, 173. Almost any biography or volume of recollections gives like evidence.

⁵ Riddle, *Recollections of War Times*, 21.

⁶ Chase MSS., *passim*.

⁷ A typical letter is one to Chase, Nov. 24, 1863. Chase MSS.

⁸ *New York Tribune*, March 19, 1861. — to Chase, Dec. 15, 1862. Chase MSS. C. M. Clay, *Autobiography*, I. 252-257.

⁹ Adams, *Richard Henry Dana*, II. 264.

matters,¹ when great issues demanded his attention, although, as always, he saw the humorous side of the situation,² and gained a goodly supply of stories, from his experiences in dealing with them. Regrettable as was this constant distraction, the importance of the work must not be underrated. The situation demanded a politician, as well as a statesman, and had Lincoln been the latter only, he would have failed in his task. If he could not have held the Republican party together, he would have formulated statesmanlike policies in vain; and that he held it together was quite largely due to such use of the public plunder that its cohesive power was felt to the uttermost. The purely political problem before Lincoln, using "political" in the narrow American sense of the word, was a more difficult one than any that had confronted previous Presidents.

Scores of diverse elements, each thinking that its labors had been the most effective, had to be kept together in the moment of victory. The sharing of the spoils revived the old enmities, which had been temporarily lost sight of in the heat of the conflict. Democrat abhorred Whig, and both still looked on the Abolitionist as dangerous, while a rumor that Lincoln would try to conciliate the border states by appointing "Bell-Everetts" in that region caused consternation.³ The *Tribune* said: "Of course, they must alienate many by their distribution of the patronage; were they angels they could not fail to do this."⁴ That the party remained solid throughout the war, and that the war Democrats so loyally supported the Union was, to be sure, mainly due to the nature of the issue, but the time that Lincoln spent in trying to "do justice to all"⁵ was not wasted. To entrust similar functions to favorites, is deemed blame-worthy in a King, or in a President when he entrusts them to a boss. Lincoln seems to have fallen into the temptation, thus to shift the task to other shoulders. He told a visitor at Springfield that he would call an adviser, when the proper time came, and would go over the most important cases with him, and would have little or nothing to do with minor posts,⁶ but fortunately he changed his mind before the trial came, and did not shirk this arduous but necessary duty.

The consensus of public opinion, in no uncertain tones, formulated the principles which should be followed in regard to the civil service. These were the halcyon days of the spoils system; but

¹ Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, III. 507.

² Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, 212; Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 25.

³ _____ to Chase, March 27, 1861. *New York Tribune*, March 26, 1861.

⁴ March 4, 1861.

⁵ Lincoln, *Complete Works*, I. 657.

⁶ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 23.

listening most intently, one can scarcely hear a whisper of reform. The public offices constituted a fund, from which the most deserving party workers were to be paid for their service; positions were to be held only four years, in order that everybody might have a chance. If this were the practice when a President succeeded one of his own party, how much more when he followed an opponent! An excuse was found for such rapid change in the theory that official duties were so easy as to be within the capacity of any American. The career of Lincoln previous to 1861 did not indicate that he opposed this creed. He had held a few minor offices in his youth, before party organization and its concomitant, the spoils system, had reached Illinois.¹ In 1849, as the voluntarily retiring representative of his district, he had much to say about certain appointments under the new Whig administration. In one letter he stated the facts in regard to the Democratic incumbent, and requested that some general rule be adopted, and that it be applied without modification in this case.² Another letter, in regard to an officer whose removal had been requested, he premised with the statement that the man in question had done the duty of his office well, and was a gentleman in a true sense, but it is evident before the end, that he shared the desire for the removal.³ Lincoln was himself an applicant, but he seems to have sacrificed his chances for the sake of a friend.⁴

While there is nothing in his conduct or expressed views before election which can be considered a protest against the prevailing practice, there is nothing, on the other hand, dishonorable. His language and action are always those of a man who is honest even with himself. He made no ante-nomination promises,⁵ and as few ante-inauguration ones as possible,⁶ but he fulfilled, in making up his cabinet, two pledges made by his managers.⁷ One well acquainted with him would have expected an honest and politic administration of the patronage, along the customary lines, for the benefit of the party.

The pressure for a "clean sweep"⁸ was so insistent that the administration could not settle down to more serious business until it was, in part at least, relieved. Seward, in his famous "Thoughts

¹ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, I. 96, 99.

² Lincoln, *Works*, I. 153.

³ *Ibid.*, I. 155.

⁴ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, I. 229-231.

⁵ Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*, II. 467.

⁶ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 23.

⁷ Rhodes, II. 467.

⁸ Brooks, *Lincoln*, 207.

for the President,"¹ mentioned this necessity, and suggested that they "make local appointments first, leaving foreign or general ones for ulterior and occasional action." This plan seems to have been followed; for several months notices of foreign appointments are rare in the papers, and begin again during the summer.² The burden was like Sisyphus's stone, however; no sooner was one swarm of applicants disposed of, than some new act, made necessary by the war, brought another about the devoted heads of the administration. While the temptations to dishonesty, owing to the sudden expansion of the budget, caused men to drop from the civil service, and leave places to be filled, the enemy were constantly creating vacancies in the army; and the patronage was a never-ending annoyance.

The sweep made by the Republicans in 1861 was the cleanest in our history; never before did so small a proportion of officers remain to carry on the traditions of the civil service. In the 1520 presidential offices, there were 1195 changes, that may be classed under the head of removals.³ In some cases there were two or three changes in the same office,⁴ and so the number left would be a little larger than would at first appear. It must be remembered, however, that there were certainly some Republicans in office, and that there have always been civil servants whose efficiency has raised them above party, men like William Hunter, who positively cannot be spared. Moreover, many offices were in the south, and were simply left unoccupied. As more and more territory was conquered, postmasters and collectors were appointed; sometimes as "vice A. B., who joined the rebels,"⁵ sometimes as *de novo*;⁶ but in many cases no record whatever is found in the *Executive Journal*, from which these statistics were compiled. It is evident, therefore, that the change in personnel must have been practically complete.

In the departments at Washington, and the local offices all over the country, changes were somewhat more numerous than usual,⁷ but here they varied from department to department, according to the disposition of those who administered the patronage in the

¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, III. 445.

² It is a peculiar incident, considering the relations between Seward and Weed and Greeley, that although the "Thoughts" are dated April 1, and remained secret so many years, the *New York Tribune* of April 2 announced: "The President has determined not to consider any further changes in the diplomatic service until the more important matters which now engross the attention of the administration are decided."

³ Fish, "Tables of Removals," in *Am. Hist. Assoc. Report*, 1899, 82.

⁴ *Executive Journal*, XI. 385; XIII. 316.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XIV. 495.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XIII. 543.

⁷ Comparison of "Blue Books" of 1859 and 1861 with those of other appropriate dates. I expect to publish, later, tables illustrating this point.

several instances. With Cameron in the War Department, we are not surprised to hear that the clerks there "received broad intimation . . . that most of them would be expected to retire, for others who had not enjoyed the flesh-pots."¹ The news was early given out that Chase intended seriously to enforce the law that subordinates should be examined before appointment;² and the regulation was apparently carried out.³ Changes were not numerous in the State Department; William Hunter was appointed under Jackson and served until 1886, and Frederick Seward says that his father retained all the loyal clerks.⁴

The mention of loyal clerks suggests one reason for the completeness of the overturn in 1861. The long alliance of the Northern Democracy with the South caused office-holders to be generally suspected. In the diplomatic service the South had about its proper proportion,⁵ yet it was popularly believed that the whole corps was pro-slavery in sentiment. The *Tribune*, June 3, 1861, stated: "In deference to universal sentiment, the President will suspend the diplomatic functions of James E. Harvey, Minister to Portugal." Seward wrote to Dayton, July 6, 1861, that our representatives in foreign courts were demoralized, and, in some cases, we had reason to believe, absolutely disloyal.⁶ The few officials who were retained in service were those who came out decidedly for the Union, as Mr. Cisco, Assistant Treasurer at New York.⁷ It is probably true also, as the *Tribune* stated, that the general standard of efficiency was lower than usual in 1860.⁸ These circumstances do not explain the proscription; that was inevitable; but they partly explain its severity.

As our public men lacked the inventiveness of our mechanics, political custom decreed that all these vacated offices, and all the new ones created by the necessities of the war, should be filled by hand. Yet custom provided, also, for the subdivision of the labor. By a gradual development, beginning in the greater local knowledge of its members, and becoming particularly rapid after the election of Jackson, Congress had established a strong claim to dictate many of the appointments. Its members, indeed, seemed ready to take upon themselves the entire burden; but as the various Secretaries were responsible for the conduct of their subordinates, they claimed

¹ *Tribune*, March 23, 1861.

² *Tribune*, March 9, 1861.

³ Hart, *Salmon P. Chase*, 216-217.

⁴ Seward, *Seward at Washington*, I. 520.

⁵ In 1859, 79 out of 151. "Blue Book."

⁶ Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward*, II. 153.

⁷ *Ex. Jour.*, IX. 324; X. 330; XII. 269.

⁸ *Tribune*, March 9, 1861.

to be heard also, while the President had his own responsibility and the claims of many outside interests to consider. The irresistible conflict between these various official interests was perhaps the more keen in the early part of the Lincoln administration, because so many of the Republicans were new men, and they lacked minute knowledge of the official tradition. Lincoln's policy in adjusting these claims is to be discovered only by a study of his practice, and was probably only developed as the cases came before him. One attempt was made to relieve the administration of a part of its burden. The *Tribune* suggested, March 13, 1861, that postmasters should be chosen by vote of the Republicans in their respective districts. Lincoln advised the use of the plan in at least one instance,¹ and it was employed in a number of cases.² It was, however, of little practical importance.

Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, gives an account of a meeting where claims of the several interests came into conflict. It was held late in March, 1861, to arrange nominations for the state of New York satisfactory to Seward and Weed, the Senators, and the President. An agreement was finally brought about, and Lincoln proposed that it be sent at once to the Senate. Welles asked if the Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney-General had been consulted, for some of the officers under consideration belonged to their departments. They had not been, but Seward said that he knew what was best for the party in the state, and that, as he and the Senators were of one mind, there need be no more discussion. Welles argued for the rights of the Secretaries; Lincoln finally decided that they ought at least to be consulted; and the nominations were deferred.³

Still, where there was harmony in the delegations, and when they met and arranged a slate, it was apt to be accepted.⁴ In regard to the post-office at Providence, Lincoln wrote to Governor Sprague that the two Senators, the two old Representatives, and one of the new ones were combined in favor of one candidate, and added: "In these cases the executive is obliged to be greatly dependent upon the members of Congress, and while under peculiar circumstances a single member or two may be overruled, I believe as strong a combination as the present never has been."⁵ A friend from Boston wrote to Chase, April 11, 1861: "You inquire, 'How overrule the Delegation?' I cannot and will not ask you to

¹ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 340-341. Letter of March 30, 1861.

² Hollister, *Schuyler Colfax*, 173.

³ Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 71.

⁴ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 200, 272.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

overrule it. But in strict response to 'How?' I will say this. The Delegation have had *their* choice in Mr. Goodrich, an old Whig—never a Free-soiler. The President has had *his* choice in Mr. Tuck for naval officer, an old Whig, finally voting for Winthrop in the celebrated contest for the speakership. Though it is your department, you have not had *your* choice."¹ Sumner in a letter to R. H. Dana, April 14, 1861, described his interview with Lincoln, when presenting the list agreed to by the Massachusetts Congressmen,² and the *Tribune* of April 13th announced that the whole of it had been accepted, though the opposition had been strong. The President seems to have made it a uniform practice to consult with the Senators before making nominations from or for their states,³ whether he could follow their advice or not. A correspondent advised Chase to send in certain nominations at once, as the next Senator from California might cause him trouble if he delayed.⁴ While the more important state posts were thus largely controlled by the delegations, and especially the Senators, the minor offices scattered over the country were generally left almost entirely to the Representatives from the district, if they were reliable. Riddle, from the Western Reserve, had all the post-offices for the asking, except that of Cleveland,⁵ in regard to which Senator Wade was consulted, who, however, refused to interfere in the matter.⁶

Although Lincoln thus made Congressional representations the basis of his system of appointments, he did not submit to dictation. There are a few evidences that Congress was not altogether satisfied, or was becoming jealous of the waxing power of the President. These are particularly interesting as indicating that the struggle between the two branches of the government might have come about, even if Johnson had not succeeded Lincoln. The first act creating the system of national banks gave the nomination of the Comptroller of the Currency to the Secretary of the Treasury, and fixed his term at five years, during which he was to be removed only by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.⁷ Such a change of constitutional principles was too great to be made until the question had been fully threshed out, and the act of 1864 modified the latter clause, so that merely a statement to the Senate of the cause of removal was required.⁸ The growing distrust of the executive is

¹ Chase MSS.

² Adams, *Dana*, II. 257.

³ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 210, 213, 513, 578.

⁴ —— to Chase, March 9, 1863. Chase MSS.

⁵ Riddle, *Recollections of War Times*, 24.

⁶ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 340.

⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 3d Session, 37th Cong., App., p. 189.

⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 1st Session, 38th Cong., App., p. 169.

also shown by a provision attached to the military appropriation bill of 1863, forbidding the payment of any salary "to any person appointed during the recess of the senate, to fill a vacancy in any existing office which vacancy existed while the senate was in session and is by law required to be filled by and with the advice and consent of the senate, until such appointees shall have been confirmed by the senate."¹

Not less sensitive than the members of Congress were the heads of departments, and several of them had, besides their official positions, strong political backing; such men were Seward, Chase and Cameron. To the same class belong certain powerful individuals, who, though in private life, exercised great influence at Washington; of these the most conspicuous were Horace Greeley and Thurlow Weed. The latter was the Mr. Hyde to Seward's Dr. Jekyl. Their close connection is illustrated by the following story related by Gideon Welles. Weed secured from Seward an order appointing one of his henchmen as consul at Falmouth, England. William Hunter, the veteran chief clerk of the State Department, protested to Weed, as the appointment involved the removal of an able official, whose father had received the post from Washington as a reward for some public service. Without further consultation Weed kindly destroyed the note Seward had given him, and thus reinstated the old consul.² Lincoln has best set out the political difficulties in New York state in a letter to Chase: "Ought Mr. Young to be removed? Ought Mr. Adams to be appointed? . . . Mr. Adams is magnificently recommended, but the great point in his favor is that Thurlow Weed and Horace Greeley join in recommending him. I suppose the like never happened before, and never will occur again; so, now or never, what do you say?"³ The President treated Weed with consideration, but did not lack in firmness.⁴

Seward could not, of course, expect to control all the appointments in his department, for foreign posts have always had an especial attraction for the office seeker. Quite a number of letters were sent to Chase asking him to secure for the applicants places under the State Department, and he obtained, besides several minor positions, the consul-generalship at Rio Janeiro for an Ohioan. This office seems, in fact, to have been considered the peculiar property of Chase, for when it fell vacant he was allowed freely to name the new occupant. Still, Seward's influence was probably felt in most

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 1st Session, 37th Cong., App., p. 183.

² Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 74.

³ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 425.

of the more important selections;¹ he was responsible for the appointment of Charles Francis Adams, against the wishes of Lincoln,² and many other estimable appointments should be credited to him, as of John Lothrop Motley, of Mr. March to Italy, and of John Bigelow as consul-general at Paris.

No one man caused the President more trouble in the distribution of the patronage than Chase, who had probably higher ideals on the subject than any one else in the Cabinet,³ and was always spurred on to fight for his rights by that suspicion of all who opposed him, which is so common in people of high ideals. He strongly advocated the right of the head of a department to choose the subordinates for whom he was responsible;⁴ but he did not attempt to control the appointments of the great collectors under him.⁵ He was favored, however, by the President's appointing, without any pressure from him, his friend Barney to the most important post of all, the collectorship of New York;⁶ while the immense expansion of business, and the great number of special officers needed, gave him abundant opportunity to try his hand at managing the patronage.

In 1864 Chase declared that he would despise himself if he were capable of appointing or removing a man for the sake of the presidency.⁷ At this high standard he seems to have aimed conscientiously during his administration of the Treasury Department; but it did not always insure a wise choice of subordinates or keep him entirely out of the mud of partizan politics. Men are known by their friends. Chase disliked opposition, and on the whole did not make friends of the chief men in public life.⁸ The impression that one gets from the letters written to him during his term of office is that, besides many high-principled men, he had about him a large number who played upon his high motives, and that he was less keen than the average man in public life in reading character. There is more flattery than is ordinary in such letters, much parade of high motive, that does not ring quite true; and, while capacity is put forward as a reason for appointment, the chief emphasis is laid upon personal friendship or need. A typical extract is the following: “‘Let justice be done if the heavens fall.’ Mr. Elliot is

¹ ——— to Chase, June 12, Aug. 29, Sept. 17, 1862; Jan. 5, 1863. Chase MSS.

² Adams, *Charles Francis Adams*, 145-146.

³ Hart, *Chase*, 311.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 305. Bancroft, *Seward*, II. 356. Chase to Seward, Mar. 27, 1861. The appointment of his brother was involved in this case.

⁵ ——— to Chase, April 11, 1861. Chase MSS. *Ex. Jour.*, Vol. XI., 292.

⁶ Hart, *Chase*, 217.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 422.

capable and honest, and for *God's sake* don't desert him now for the clamor of those not his equals in either respect; a better man or one more sincerely your friend is not a candidate for the office."¹ Another: "I can assure you that I should look upon his appointment as a *deadly blow at your influence in this city*, and I believe Dr. Nixon is the only reliable friend of yours who is a candidate."² Another: "God knows no one needs the appointment more than I do."³ One interesting recommendation is that he find a consulship for an Ohio editor, in order that an abler man might be found to fill the place.⁴

As a result, partly of his lack of judgment in selection and partly of the sudden expansion of the business of his department, many of his appointees got into trouble. In these cases Chase seems almost always to have been deeply moved by loyalty to friendship, and to have hesitated too long in seeing reason for removal. Perhaps, also, his legal training made him unable to appreciate that when a public servant is suspected, much less than legal proof may justify, nay emphatically call for, his dismissal. This led to continual friction with Lincoln, and much heart-burning. The most important case is that of Victor Smith, Collector at Puget Sound. He fell under suspicion of dishonesty,⁵ probably unjust, but he was certainly guilty of sharp practice and had utterly lost the confidence of the community.⁶ Lincoln, therefore, after a struggle with Chase, decided on his removal.⁷ The latter in a letter to Smith expressed his unshaken confidence in him,⁸ and assured him that he would give him another appointment if he could.⁹

This personal loyalty made every failure to secure his point seem a personal rebuff, and the situation became particularly strained toward the end of the administration, when Chase was leader of the radicals, and Lincoln had to conciliate all factions. In New York, Barney tried to oppose Seward and Weed,¹⁰ but was not strong enough to maintain himself in the troubled sea of New York politics, and Lincoln finally decided to remove him.¹¹ Chase probably agreed with a correspondent in St. Louis, that there was "war from

¹ ——— to Chase, May 19, 1861. Chase MSS.

² ——— to Chase, March 9, 1861. Chase MSS.

³ ——— to Chase, Sept. 3, 1861. Chase MSS.

⁴ ——— to Chase, Sept. 1, 1863. Chase MSS.

⁵ ——— to Chase, May 30, 1862. Chase MSS.

⁶ Hart, *Chase*, 305-306.

⁷ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 364. Lincoln, *Works*, II. 335.

⁸ Smith to Chase, June 3, 1863.

⁹ Warden, *Account of the Private Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase*, 529.

¹⁰ ——— to Chase, Feb. 26, 1864; ——— to Chase, June 3, 1864. Chase MSS.

¹¹ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 313.

the White House" upon his friends,¹ and matters did not become more pleasant after his withdrawal from the contest for the presidential nomination.² Finally a difficulty about an office in New York, which he fought through and finally compromised with a New York Senator, led him to send in his resignation, perhaps with the idea of forcing a definite arrangement with regard to the patronage. The resignation was unexpectedly accepted. Perhaps Lincoln did not feel like entering upon another term with the certain prospect of friction in the Cabinet. July 1, 1864, Chase ceased to be Secretary of the Treasury.

The other members of the Cabinet occasioned much less difficulty. Stanton quietly attended to his business, though he was occasionally irritable.³ Cameron's remark, that if Pennsylvania had stood by him at Chicago, he would have been President, "and then we all could have gotten everything that we wanted,"⁴ shows him a spoilsman and unashamed, but as such, he, perhaps, understood the position of the President better than Chase; while his incompetency soon caused him to be delicately transferred to a post in Russia.⁵ The Blairs had learned politics in the school of Jackson and, like Cameron, knew the traditions, and were besides in confidential relations with Lincoln,⁶ until the dismissal of Montgomery in 1864. The following message to the Secretary of the Interior shows that the President was disposed to consult the less powerful Secretaries: "Please ask the Commissioner of Indian affairs and of the General Land Office to come with you, and see me at once. I want the assistance of all of you in overhauling the list of appointments a little before I send them to the senate."⁷ While he could rather peremptorily command the most powerful when necessary,⁸ in ordinary circumstances he did not force his opinion on even the minor subordinates who dispensed the patronage. He wrote to Chase: "I have been greatly—I may say, grievously—disappointed and disobliged by Mr. Cochran's refusal to make Mr. Evans deputy naval officer, as I requested him to do. . . . A point must be strained to give Mr. Evans a situation."⁹

Another set of men who claimed to be heard were the governors.

¹ ——— to Chase, Oct. 30, 1863. Chase MSS.

² Hart, *Chase*, 310-314.

³ Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edward M. Stanton*, 246-248. Hart, *Chase* 307.

⁴ McClure, *Lincoln and the Men of War-Times*, 132.

⁵ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 76-78. Weed, *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, 330.

⁶ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 374, 375, 433, 434, 438, 579.

⁷ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 343.

⁸ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 335.

⁹ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 42.

Governor Morton wrote: "I learn incidentally that the Indiana delegation has nominated men to be appointed brigadier-generals. I do not know who they are, and have not been consulted. I have had much more to do with the officers than any member of Congress, and have had much more responsibility in connection with the organization than any of them, and I believe I should at least have the chance of being heard before any action is taken." The President answered that the rumor was untrue, and asked him to telegraph recommendations.¹ No dictation, however, was allowed; when Governor Morton at another time complained of two rumored nominations, Lincoln replied that they had not been made, but added: "The latter particularly has been my friend, and I am sorry to learn that he is not yours."² To Governor Pierpont, of West Virginia, who was irritated by an appointment, the President wrote that he had thought the name of the appointee was approved by the governor, but knew that it was not the one the governor preferred.³ A despatch to Governor Tod, of Ohio, was as follows: "I think your advice with that of others would be valuable in the selection of provost marshals for Ohio."⁴

Military appointments, in the beginning of the war, were made in the same way as those in the civil service; later the majority of promotions settled themselves. Where the administration was forced to deal with the matter the advice of the higher officers seems to have been considered, though not decisive or having a weight of authority like that of a Senator:⁵ merely an additional factor in these special cases, valuable according to the personal influence of the individual.

While allowing that others had a right to be heard, Lincoln never forgot that he, as responsible head of the government, owed it to himself, and to the country, to be master. His Cabinet was his own, and he⁶ maintained it, even when requested by the Republican Senate Caucus to make changes.⁷ The freedom of choice, which he allowed the various officials, was a freedom to act within the limiting conditions of his policy. It is, therefore, important to discover, as far as possible, what that policy was.

In some few cases he sought the man whose abilities best fitted him for the post,⁸ but these were distinctly exceptions. In general

¹ Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, 154.

² Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 347.

³ *Ibid.*, II. 352.

⁴ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 361.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II. 356, 360, 362.

⁶ Rhodes, III. 320.

⁷ Rhodes, IV. 206.

⁸ See for example Lamon, *Recollections*, 211.

he followed the accepted doctrine that many could perform the duties required, and that other qualities and circumstances should be taken into consideration in making the selection. As there was nothing novel in this practice, so the additional considerations were, most of them, time-honored. But in the abundance of traditions there were some that he neglected, and in this, and in the weight assigned to each, he showed his individuality.

From the days of the Continental Congress, geographical considerations have always had their influence. Had George Washington lived in Delaware, he would not have been chosen commander-in-chief in 1775. Such influences are a natural result of our territorial extent, our federal and representative government. Lincoln was himself largely indebted to them for his own nomination. His appreciation of them is sufficiently obvious from a study of his Cabinet. "Pennsylvania, any more than New York or Ohio, cannot be overlooked," he told Weed.¹ The geographical arrangement, once fixed, was continued through all Cabinet changes. Stanton, of Pennsylvania, succeeded Cameron, of the same state. Caleb Smith was followed by Usher, also of Indiana; Bates, of Missouri, by Speed, of Kentucky; and when Chase's place could not be filled from Ohio, an Ohio Postmaster-General was soon afterwards appointed. When McCulloch was needed in the Treasury, Usher resigned, that Indiana might not have two members. It was with reluctance, however, that, as President-elect, Lincoln yielded to advice, and requested John A. Gilmer, who was not a Republican, to take a place in his Cabinet, in order that the South might be represented.² Party consolidation seemed to outweigh geography in this instance. When he could do so without risk, however, he was glad to favor the South. The double representation of Missouri was largely due to the fact that it was the only slave state to give a respectable Republican vote. Early in 1861 he wrote to John A. Gilmer: "As to the use of patronage in the slave states, where there are few or no Republicans, I do not expect to inquire for the politics of the appointee, or whether he does or does not own slaves. I intend in that matter to accommodate the people in the several localities, if they themselves will allow me to accommodate them. In one word, I never have been, am not now, and probably never shall be in a mood of harassing the people either north or south."³ When President, he gave one applicant a note for the Postmaster-General, concluding: "I think Virginia should be heard in such cases."⁴

¹ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, I. 400.

³ *Ibid.*, 394.

² *Ibid.*, I. 402.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.

Another object of importance was to adjust properly the claims of the various factions that made up the party. In part this was easily accomplished. When parties are young each state is apt to have its favorite son, and geographical considerations brought the local leaders into the Cabinet. But there were still difficulties. December 24, 1860, Lincoln wrote to Hamlin: "I need a man of democratic antecedents from New England. I cannot get a fair share of that element in without."¹ When the Cabinet was complete, Seward, Bates and Smith, with Lincoln, offset Welles, Cameron, Chase and Blair.² This balance was not preserved throughout the term. Stanton did succeed Cameron, and Governor Tod of Ohio was asked to take Chase's position;³ but the Whig element ultimately became the stronger; without counting Usher, whose earlier political relations I have been unable to learn, five members of the Cabinet at the time of Lincoln's death were of Whig antecedents. By that time, however, these old time party distinctions had become less important.

The main object of these two rules was to avoid giving offense, but not all of Lincoln's principles were negative. He was all the time using the patronage to strengthen the party and aid in carrying out the policy of the administration. Sometimes he put a prominent man in a good humor by volunteering to let him name a boy for West Point,⁴ or by the unexpected offer of a foreign mission.⁵ He liked the idea of appointing a man named Schimmelpfening, as it would be something "unquestionably in the interest of the Dutch."⁶ He made, moreover, far more definite use of his power. Charles A. Dana⁷ describes the anxiety of Lincoln lest the bill for the admission of Nevada should not pass, and a vote on the Thirteenth Amendment be lost. The prospect was that the House would oppose the bill, but by a small majority. Lincoln sent Dana to two of the New York delegation and one member from New Jersey with carte blanche to offer them anything in the line of patronage in return for their votes. Two were secured by internal collectorships. One held out, and was promised a \$20,000 office in the New York customs-house; he did not secure it, however, as the bargain had not been executed before the death of Lincoln, and Johnson refused to recognize it. The account of this transaction was written long afterwards, but it is circumstantial and probably

¹ Hamlin, *Life and Times of Hannibal Hamlin*, 374.

² Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 34.

³ Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IX. 332-343.

⁴ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 378.

⁵ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 653.

⁶ Lamon, *Recollections*, 133.

⁷ Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 174-179.

trustworthy in the main points.¹ Such cases seldom come to light; and when one is found, others probably may be inferred. This simply means that Lincoln stretched a point, in time of need, in the use of the patronage, as he did in the interpretation of the constitution.

All evidence indicates that Lincoln never went to such extremes except to accomplish some really vital object, that he never abused, and apparently never used, the patronage for personal aggrandizement. After Chase's resignation, the President instructed Fessenden not to remove the friends of Chase.² Of course, the conditions made it impossible to prevent subordinate officers from interfering in factional fights, particularly those at a distance from Washington and in the south,³ but Lincoln seems to have faithfully followed the principles laid down in a letter to a postmaster, accused of misusing his official power, August 5, 1864: . . . "All our friends should have absolute freedom of choice among our friends. My wish, therefore, is that you will do just as you think fit with your own suffrage in the case, and not constrain any of your subordinates to do other than he sees fit with his."⁴ As the use of the patronage to carry out a broad national policy, if not commendable, is to be distinguished from that for personal advantage, so the latter should not be confused with a little harmless favoritism or nepotism. Lincoln was seldom nice about small points, and perhaps felt justified in getting some pleasure out of his heavy task. Many instances are given of his appointing old friends, generally for friendship's sake,⁵ and sometimes against advice.⁶ Mrs. Lincoln's "numerous cousins" were occasionally aided in securing favors.⁷ He was always fond of artists, and wrote to Seward in regard to two who had painted his portrait at Springfield, that he had "some wish" that they might have some of those moderate-sized consulates which facilitate artists a little in their profession.⁸

Underlying all these principles, and the hundred rules implied in them, was the basal theory of the spoils system, which has been

¹ A hunt for the posts involved fails to reveal them, but for obvious reasons; the yeas and nays were not called for when the bill passed, the members who wanted the collectorships, doubtless, only cared for the patronage—that is, took them to give away, and the other did not get his post.

² Hart, *Chase*, 318.

³ —— to Chase, Feb. 26, 1864, states that the Republican candidate for governor of Louisiana was nominated because of his use of government patronage.

⁴ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 558.

⁵ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, I. 105, 106; II. 360, 502-505. Herndon, *Lincoln*, III. 506, 507.

⁶ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 17.

⁷ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 430.

⁸ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, I. 374.

mentioned as the accepted doctrine of the day. The civil service was a great treasury to be drawn on at will. If a man drew on it for purposes high and good, provided the efficiency of the service was tolerable, he did all that could be expected of him. That the evil lay deeper than the simple use of offices for political purposes is easily seen. July 21, 1863, Lincoln wrote to Blair, that soldiers and their families had the best claim on the patronage.¹ This claim, widely acknowledged, has caused incalculable harm to public service, and yet seems so reasonable and proper that reformers have many times been obliged to compromise with it. It would be unjust to expect Lincoln to see the fallacy in this seductive theory, or find a solution of the problems that would arise if it were thrown aside. If he had had them pointed out to him, he would probably have replied that, for the present at least, there were things of more import than bringing administration to the highest pitch of excellence, and that he could not afford to part with this powerful party cement.

From such a creed there seems little hope of any fundamental betterment. The great civil service reform movement began just to swell in the bud during Lincoln's life-time.² One sign there was that he might have favored it; he was annoyed at the claim that the patronage made upon his time. He was loath to remove from office even a person unfriendly to him,³ until the official's incapacity had been thoroughly proved;⁴ and, inasmuch as new appointments would be entailed, he disliked to appoint any one already in office to a new vacancy.⁵ The most notable example of this feeling, however, is found at the very close of his life. The doctrine of rotation in office had, after a long, slow growth, attained its highest point in 1856, when Buchanan, though succeeding a President of his own party, turned out the office-holders under the decent cover of this respectable phrase. When Lincoln's second inauguration approached, the expectation was that he would push the principle still further, and turn out his own appointees. He tried to stir up public sentiment against it; but on March 4, 1865, the *Tribune* an-

¹ Lincoln, *Works*, II. 375.

² Sumner in 1864 brought in a bill (Von Holst, *Preussischen Jahrbücher*, XXXVI. 376). Jenckes did not bring in his until the fall of 1865. A fragment of a proposed bill for consular reform did pass (*Cong. Globe*, 1st Sess. 38th Cong., App., p. 182), but was a revival of a law of 1865 (*ibid.*, 1st Sess. 38th Cong., 1115), except for the provision that consular clerks should be removed only for cause, stated in writing, at the first session following. This was passed rather, perhaps, because of jealousy of the President than desire to protect the clerk.

³ Lamon, *Recollections*, 211.

⁴ Tarbell, *Lincoln*, II. 66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 418.

nounced: "The second inaugural of President Lincoln takes place at Washington to-day, and an immense throng of politicians . . . have already flocked thither, . . . to push their fortunes." Lincoln was firm, however, and March 7 the same paper stated: "Office-seekers were informed that no general removal of officers would be made." This really unusual willingness to diminish the power of the patronage, even though personal annoyance was the main cause of it, was a long step on the road to reform, and it is by no means improbable that Lincoln, with his wonderful capacity for growth, might have accepted the idea of appointment by examination, and advanced it to an earlier victory.

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